

Rainer Polak (1994)
Liner notes to the CD:

**JAKITE, DUNBIA, KUYATE, AND SAMAKE:
BAMAKÒ FÒLI:
JENBE MUSIC FROM BAMAKO (MALI)**



Figure 1: *Jenbe* player Jaraba Jakite performs for a namegiving festival (*denkundi*) one afternoon in August 1994, Badialan, Bamako.
Photo: R. Polak

- Tracks:
- 1) Bamana-fòli / Tisanba
 - 2) Sunun
 - 3) Wasulunka / Kirin
 - 4) Bamana-fòli
 - 5) Bamana-fòli / Tansole
 - 6) Tègèrè Tulon / Pès
 - 7) Jina-fòli
 - 8) Jina-fòli
 - 9) Woloso-dòn / Jòn-fòli
 - 10) Komo
 - 11) Jina-fòli
 - 12) Mendiani
 - 13) Wasulunka / Kirin
 - 14) Dununba
 - 15) Tègèrè tulon
- Total time: 48 min.
- Drummers:
- Jaraba Jakite (lead jenbe)
 - Madu Jakite (accompanying jenbe)
 - Solo Samake (dununba variations)
 - Fasirimán Keita (dununin accompaniment) and Jeli Madi Kuyate on #7
 - Yamadu Bani Dunbia (jenbe) and Draman Keita (dunun) on #8-11
 - Brahima Samake (lead jenbe)
 - J.M. Kuyate (jenbe accompaniment) and M. Jakite (jenbe accompaniment) on (#12-14)
- Singers:
- Sita Ye Jabate (lead #1, #3)
 - Mamanin Kante (lead #2, #6, #15)
 - Fatumata Kulibali and Na Kulibali (lead #4, #5)

Recordings, text, c+p 1999: Rainer Polak



Figure 2:

Singer Sita Ye Jabate is pouring water in front of the drummers to reduce the dust that soon will be raised by the solo dancers' stamping feet. Later on the same afternoon in August 1994 as figure 1, Badialan, Bamako. Photo: R. Polak

I. FIELD RECORDINGS AT AN URBAN BAMANA WEDDING FESTIVAL

These tracks were recorded in August 1994 in Badialan 1, a popular quarter in the western part of Bamako, between the city center and the outskirts. It was founded in the early 1950s when the economy was on the rise, and people in French West Africa had gained much improved legal and constitutional status, and forced labor was abolished: it was a period of great hope in Mali (then the French Soudan) and other parts of Africa.

Although this is urban wedding music, it could have taken place in exactly the same way as part of a name-giving ceremony or an engagement. The same rhythms could also be played for a circumcision, but in that setting you would likely hear the rhythms *suku* and *fura-si* as well.

As a result of the ethnic background of the organizing family in the context of its urban residence, the music is an integration of Bamako *jenbe* style (in the personal style of Jaraba Jakite and his party) and the Bamana repertoire. If the family had been of a different background, the performance would have resulted in a different mixture of urban and rural styles.

Drummers: Jaraba Jakite (lead *jenbe*)
 Madu Jakite (accompanying *jenbe*)
 Solo Samake (*dununba* variations)
 Fasiriman Keita (*dununin* accompaniment)

Singers: Sita Ye Jabate (#1, #3)
Mamanin Kante (#2, #6)
Fatumata Kulibali and Na Kulibali (#4, #5) alternatively take the lead, and play *yabara* and *ngusun* rattles and, together with their party, make up the chorus.



Figure 3:
Badialan drummers (left to right: Dra Keita, Sedu Keita, Madu Jakite, Burlaye Dunbia) spur on a solo dancer. Same afternoon as figures 1 & 2: August 1994, Badialan, Bamako.
Photo: R. Polak

TRACKS:

1. *Bamana-fòli /Tisanba*

The rhythms of track 1, 4 and 5 are all named *Bamana-fòli* ("drumming of the Bamana"), even though they consist of different patterns. By "Bamana" the Bamakoians refer here to the Beledugu Bamana. The region called Beledugu begins immediately to the north of Bamako, with the administrative center for the area located in Kolokani. The repertoire described here as *Bamana-fòli* is distinct from that of the Segu Bamana (which in Bamako is represented, for example, by the *jenbe* rhythms *Bara* and *Bonjalan*).

2. *Sunun*

Sunun comes from Kaarta, which is a region and former kingdom in the Nioro, Bafulabe and Kolokani triangle. The people are called Kagòdòrò or Kakòdòdò; sometimes they are referred to as a Bamana subgroup. Fulbe, Soninke and others live in the same region. Kaarta is both the northern-most area where a Manding dialect is spoken, as well being the northern-most extension of the *jenbe* heartland.

3. *Wasulunka (Kirin)*

The rhythm *Kirin* from the Wasulun region (a very small region, southwest of Bougouni and near Yanfolila) is called *Wasulunka* (which means "a person from Wasulun") in Bamako. The song is " *n'i den t'i bolo* " ("If you have no child").

Wasulun music uses the same pentatonic scale as most Bamana music, which makes it easy to integrate Wasulun into the Bamana repertoire. Most Wasulun singers know how to sing Bamana songs and vice versa (in contrast it is more difficult to integrate the songs of most Maninka jeli singers (griot heptatonic style) in either a Bamana or Wasulun musical context).

4. *Bamana-fòli*

This rhythm is sometimes referred to as *Bòn-fòli* because it was originally played on a Bamana drum called *Bòn* (or *Bònkolo* or *Bònjalan*). This also holds true for all the other Bamana rhythms from Segu and Beledugu which were not originally played on the *jenbe* either. In Bamako, this rhythm is often played as a slow, solemn introduction to a dance that then switches to the rhythm demonstrated on track 1 (*Tisanba*). The *dunun* variations are taken from the rhythm *Bara* (from Segu, as played in Bamako).

5. *Bamana-fòli / Tansole*

Another Bamana rhythm, which is referred to by some as *Tansole*.

6. *Tègèrè Tulon* (hand clap game) / *Pès*

This is a typical game for children and young people. The title of the game *sèngèrè* refers to a dry, plain millet porridge eaten without sauce, which is not going down the throat very easily. In the second part you hear the playful rhythm *Pès*, which was inspired by a Zairois pop hit.



Figure.4:
Solo Samake (center left), Jaraba Jakite (back right), and
an unidentified drummer from Kati spur on a dancer whose name I do not
know at a circumcison (fura-si) festival. September 1994.
Photo: R. Polak

The preceding tracks complete the "festival" part of the CD.

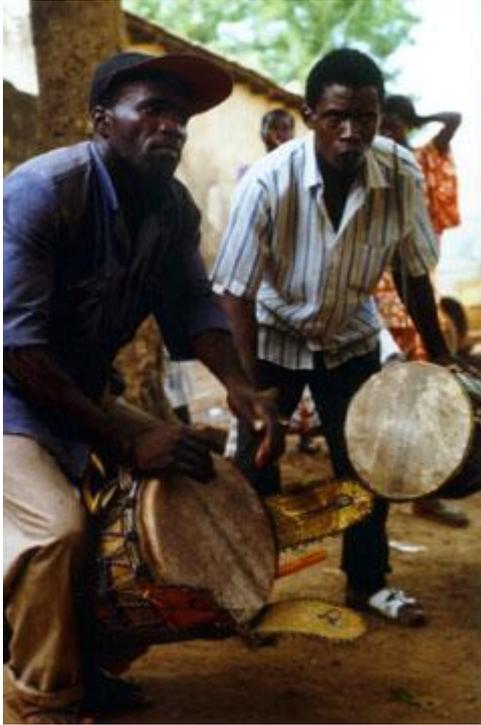


Figure 5:
Jembe player Jaraba Jakite and *dunun* specialist Madu Jakite follow the dancer's movement with their eyes in 1997, Badialan, Bamako.
Photo: R. Polak



Figure 6:
Dressing up for a festive ay. 1994, Badialan, Bamako.
Photo: Barbara Polak



Figure 7:
Jenbe player Jeli Madi Kuyate with a friend for whose wedding (*konyo*) he is playing. 1995, Badialan, Bamako.
Photo: Barbara Polak

II. STUDIO RECORDINGS MADE IN BAMAKO

7. *Jina-fòli*

Jenbe solo by Jeli Madi Kuyate, born about 1949. He was formerly a member of *Ballet Maliens* and is now retired. He performs *Jina-fòli* which is the name for about four different rhythms played at the ceremonies of spirit possession cults (see above; for more information on spirit possession cults in Mali please refer to the work of Gibbal (1982) cited in the [Manding Bibliography](#) that is part of this web site). Jeli Madi uses two *Jina* rhythms, improvises a bit (using variations of the *Kofili / Wasulunka / Sumale* rhythm family). He then plays some free style percussion (what they call *Manamana-fòli* or "nonsense-playing for the sake of the play") to conclude with some circles of *Maraka* and then *Take*.

8. *Jina-fòli*

Titles 8 – 11 are duets by Yamadu Bani Dunbia (*jenbe*) and Draman Keita (*dunun*). Grand Yamadu explores ones of the rhythms which was used in his pupil's solo (see #7) in some detail.

9. *Woloso-dòn / Jòn-fòli*

Yamadu himself was born as a house-slave (*woloso*). *Woloso-dòn* means "dance of the woloso". The same often is called *Jòn-fòli*, the rhythm of the slaves.

10. *Komo-fòli*

Komo is a secret society (French: *société d'initiation*). This and other regional religio-political institutions lost most of their power during the Fulbe's islamic jihad (second half of 19th century) and during the colonial and post-colonial periods. Yet Yamadu was very active in playing them in rural areas well into the 1970s. Several rhythms are performed for the *komo* ceremonies in one place, and they vary from region to region. The one played by Yamadu in Bamako is known in the area south of Bamako by both the Bamana and Maninka.

11. *Jina-fòli*

Grand Yamadu returns to *Jina-fòli*, his specialty for about five decades. This is the first and oldest spirit rhythm and this is how it is played in Bamako.

12. *Mendiani*

We now come (tracks #12-14) to a trio made up of Brahima "Petit B" Samake (lead *jenbe*), Jeli Madu Kuyate (*jenbe* accompaniment), and Madu Jakite (*jenbe* accompaniment). The recording was made in the Palais de la Culture of Bamako: a huge concrete dome with a deep hall effect. Petit B is the current lead drummer with the *Ballets Maliens*.

13. *Wasulunka / Kirin*

14. *Dununba*

This is how *Dununba* is played in Bamako. They sometimes call it *Lagineka* (La-Guinée-ka) *Dununba*, i.e. "the *Dununba* of the people from Guinea". It is played primarily in the ballets, but only to a lesser extent in the festivals. When some troupe members or professional dancers perform at a festival, they definitely will show off their skills with it, setting themselves off from the amateur dancers.

15. Another *Tègèrè tulong* (hand clap game) performed by Mamanin Kante fades into and ends with some notes played on the *kamalen ngonni* (young men's 6 stringed bridge harp from Wasulun) by Sedu Balo.